

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Lope Ancheta, 72, retired shoe store owner,  
Kahului

*"Some other Filipino businessman make better than me, I don't know. Me, not so bad. I made a living."*

Lope Ancheta, Ilocano, was born September 21, 1907, in Laoag, Ilocos Norte, Philippines. His parents were farmers. He came to Hawaii in 1927 and first worked in the pineapple fields above Haliimaile, Maui. In 1930, Ancheta started working as a shoe repair and delivery man for Watanabe Store in Wailuku. In 1935, he started his own shoe repair shop in Kahului, selling to and repairing shoes for Paia and Puunene plantation residents.

Specializing in shoes and tennis equipment, Ancheta operated the Kahului Shoe Shop from 1953 to 1972.

Today, Ancheta enjoys traveling. In recent years he has made a trip to Europe and several trips to the Mainland. Ancheta, the father of three, and his wife, Juliana, presently reside in Kahului.

Tape No. 7-65-1-80

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Lope Ancheta (LA)

March 10, 1980

Kahului, Maui

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with Mr. Lope Ancheta. Today is March 10, 1980, and we're at his home in Kahului, Maui.

Okay, what is your birthdate?

LA: September 21, 1907.

WN: Where were you born?

LA: In the Philippines--Laoag, Philippines.

WN: What was the name of that village within Laoag?

LA: Dibua.

WN: What kind of work did your parents do?

LA: Farmers. Rice farmers, corn farmers, vegetable farmers.

WN: Did you help them at all?

LA: I helped them sometimes, not every time.

WN: What kind of work did you do?

LA: Planting, harvest.

WN: Planting what? Rice?

LA: Yeah. Planting rice, planting corn, planting vegetables, and so on.

WN: The rice, and the corn, and the vegetables that your parents grew, they sold it to anybody?

LA: They sold some. Some, we used for ourselves.

WN: Who did they sell to?

LA: Sell to the markets or some other people--individuals. Because some of those people there do not have enough, so we have to sell [to] them.

WN: Do you think most was sold to people, or most, you folks kept for yourself?

LA: Mostly used for ourselves because we belong to a big family, eh? (Chuckles)

WN: How many in your family?

LA: About fourteen, but not all one time. Because we got grandfather and grandmother, too.

WN: Oh, living with you folks?

LA: Yeah, they live together with us. Not all the time.

WN: Do you know how many acres your mother and father had to farm?

LA: Oh, about five acres, I think.

WN: When you were young, growing up in Laoag, what did you do to have fun?

LA: Oh, we go swimming, we go fishing in the morning. In the afternoon, maybe, we go play ball--basketball sometimes, or volleyball, and baseball. But mostly, I go volleyball. In the Philippines, volleyball is my favorite sport.

WN: You folks had any kind organized league or anything like that?

LA: We get in the school. We got baseball team and basketball team.

WN: To go school, how far you had to go to go to school? How far you had to walk?

LA: [LA misinterprets question.] Oh, have to graduate high school. And then, you go about four years college, then you can be a professional--to be a teacher, or maybe, you can go higher college, maybe lawyer or . . .

WN: Yeah, but for you to go school, how far away was the school?

LA: About two miles away from the school. I had to walk.

WN: You used to wear shoes when you were small?

LA: No, no. I barefooted when I was small. Mostly just slippers over there, those days--young time. No can afford to buy shoes all the time, but when I wen go high school, then I wear shoes.

WN: What about your house? What kind of house you folks lived in?

LA: A small house, wooden house. Country place, you see. Farmer's house.

WN: Had straw and bamboo, too?

LA: We got some bamboo, too. Some part, bamboo; some part, wood. Like the kitchen is [made of] bamboo. Because we get about five-bedroom house, you know. Because big family.

WN: What kind floor had?

LA: Bamboo floor. Oh, you mean, the foundation? Dirt floor. Yeah, but we get one higher floor. We live on the upper floor. The lower floor is dirt floor, just like warehouse. Some, we no can put in the granary, so we put store inside there [the house]. Even the rice--some rice, over there--corn. We storage.

WN: You folks used to raise da kine chickens and cows, like that?

LA: Yeah, we get some cows; we get some chickens. But far away from the house. They get their own stable and chicken house. They were far apart from the house. We raise our own.

WN: You folks used to eat the beef or use just for milk?

LA: No, we no eat the beef. The chicken, we eat some, but the beef, when [the cows] come old, we sell 'em to the market. We raise pig, too, but mostly, we sell to the markets.

WN: Pig?

LA: Yeah. Chickens, we used to eat them.

WN: Had ten children in your family, eh?

LA: Twelve. But the two is different place already. The older two.

WN: The oldest? They were half-brothers?

LA: Half-brothers.

WN: So, then, when did you . . .

LA: When I came to Hawaii, I was nineteen years old.

WN: Nineteen years old. In 1927, you came to Hawaii?

LA: Yeah, yeah. About then.

WN: What made you decide to come Hawaii?



LA: Oh, I get cousin over here. He told me to come, so I joined him.

WN: What kind things he said about Hawaii?

LA: To see the place and earn money, that's all.

WN: He said was good, or was . . . . Do you remember?

LA: He did not tell me, but I would like to go abroad that time, see the place. Inasmuch as my family is so big, so I like to move away to go on my own.

WN: When you were growing up in Philippines, what you wanted to be when you came big?

LA: I did not plan anything because I was only second year in high school. So, I did not plan anything yet. My family's too big, so I decided to come over here instead of going some more to school, because I know my parents cannot afford to send me to higher education. So, I decide to come to the United States.

WN: You had to pay your way, your boat fare, to come to Hawaii?

LA: Yeah. We borrowed money to pay the transportation to come here.

WN: You remember how much?

LA: About 110 pesos, that time. Or 125, I forget already.

WN: When you left Philippines, you expected to return to Philippines?

LA: Yeah. That's what I planned to do. As soon as I can earn some money, I have to return. But I did not return until after the war [World War II]. (Chuckles) That's about twenty years after that. Because the war broke out. I came 1927, then I went back 1947. That's twenty years. Yeah, about twenty years.

WN: While you were in Hawaii, did you send money back to your parents?

LA: Yeah. I send all the time as soon as I get some. I have to send them because they need it. All these years I been here, I send little by little as soon as I get enough to send.

WN: What about your brothers? Did they come to Hawaii, too? Some brothers?

LA: Yeah. I get two brothers here now. They're still here. One in Kauai and one in Honolulu now. And I get one sister just arrived last year.

WN: So, you and your two brothers was sending money back home to your parents?

LA: Sometimes, they send, too. But my parents are both gone. Nobody up there [Philippines], except for one sister now left over there.

WN: When you came to Hawaii, you landed Honolulu first?

LA: Yeah, that's right. We stayed there three days, and then they sent us over here to Maui.

WN: You said your cousin was already over here? Where he was?

LA: Yeah. He was in the Stable Camp, Paia.

WN: So, how come you were able to go where your cousin was?

LA: Because he called me to go there and help him out. But the job over there was too heavy for me. I cannot stand. So, I get one good friend in Haleakala [Camp]. The job over there is easier, so I went there and worked for 2-1/2 years.

WN: First of all, in the Stable Camp, you said work was hard?

LA: Was heavy job.

WN: What you did?

LA: They call that huki lepo. Then, in Hawaiian, what's that?

WN: Hō hana?

LA: You know the ditch for plant the cane? You have to make ditch on that, and then they'll plant the cane. They call that huki lepo.

WN: Oh, not weeding [i.e., hō hana], then?

LA: Not weeding. Make ditch for the cane to plant. Now, they don't use that. They use plow to open the dirt, like that. Before, they use hoe to (laughs) open the dirt, and then plant the cane--the seed.

WN: You call 'em what?

LA: Huki lepo. I worked there only eleven days.

WN: Eleven days? How much you got one day?

LA: One dollar, one day. That's back in 1927--one dollar, one day.

WN: How many hours one day?

LA: Ten hours. Ten cents one hour. (Laughs) I was nineteen years old, almost twenty years old, I think, that time.

WN: You didn't do that kind work before in Philippines?

- LA: Yeah, but as soon as you get tired, you can stop, eh? Not like over there, you got (laughs) hard work. Somebody's watching you. Philippine Islands, maybe you work two hours, you can stop and rest. Not over there. Ten hours.
- WN: The lunas, were they strict?
- LA: Yeah. Those days, they were strict. Everybody work steady. But [if] you alone no work steady, not so good. You have to follow all those guys.
- WN: How did you quit? You just told them?
- LA: I just told them I quit, that's all. I did not take my money. All my money over there, too, you know. Because first time we arrive over there, they give me some coupon--five-dollar coupon. Then you can buy with the coupon some food for yourself, clothing. Buy whatever you want, see? But I worked there eleven days. I did not take the rest of my money. Supposed to get \$5-something, though. That's what I think, but I just . . .
- WN: They gave you coupon, or you had to buy a coupon?
- LA: They give coupon because you no can buy. If you work, they deduct from your pay, that month. When you [first] arrive, you no get anything [i.e., pay]. You no can buy any coupon. So, they give you the coupon to buy your things, then they let you work. On payday, they deduct the amount from your pay--[the cost of] your coupon, you see? But it was too bad for myself that I worked eleven days, they give me only five dollar's worth of coupon. I spent that. And then, maybe five dollar or six dollars more supposed to be, eh? I went back. They no can find the thing. Somebody . . .
- WN: Oh, so you made eleven dollars? Then, they deduct five dollars from the pay?
- LA: Yeah, yeah. Because they give me advance five-dollar coupon. But, too bad. They no find. Somebody swiped the six dollars. They no can find, so I didn't mind.
- WN: Six dollars? That's plenty money, yeah?
- LA: Yeah, yeah. Those days, six dollars plenty money. They no can find. I come back about in two months [to collect the pay]. I did not go there and pick up quick [i.e., right away].
- WN: You waited then?
- LA: Yeah. The five dollars all right because I bought merchandise for myself. But the six dollars [remaining after the deduction], you see, I did not take that. Somebody took but.
- WN: How come you had to get coupon? How come you couldn't just charge

right away at the store?

LA: No, they give you a coupon, and then you take the coupon and present to the store. That's the way they do. Because they don't know you, eh?

WN: Oh, because you were new?

LA: I'm new, you see? They don't know you. If you get the coupon, that means you get job [with the plantation]. You get number over there, everything. But you go yourself, you aren't known. Your face, they no can tell who and who. So, if the coupon get, easier. After that, you can charge. (Laughs)

WN: But before that?

LA: Yeah, before that, the first time, cannot [charge]. That's the way they make it.

WN: Where you went? Paia Store?

LA: Paia Store. No more the Paia Store now for long time.

WN: So, you said you moved to Haleakala Camp? You didn't have any money, then, with you?

LA: No, I no get any money. I get good friend over there to help me out. I paid some. Some, he said, no need. So, he give me. But friend, now, who helped me in Haleakala, he in the Philippines now. So, when I go home, I always go there and help, give something, because he get hard time. He get plenty children now. (Laughs) And they get this house. He got wife, so I help him.

WN: So, what you did when you went up Haleakala Camp? What kind work?

LA: Experiment. I help the Pineapple Experiment Station. Of course, I was picking pineapple, cutting the grass. All kinds. Poison. Waste control, something like that. After that, they give me little bit better job.

WN: How long you was out picking pineapple?

LA: About one year, I think. One year and a half, that is your job.

WN: Which job more easy? Sugar or pineapple?

LA: Pineapple much easier, that's why I went up. The wages is higher. One dollar and fifty cents [a day], that time. Sugar plantation was one dollar.

WN: This Haleakala Camp was under Maui Pine?

LA: No, was CPC, California Packing Corporation. Those days, was

California Packing Corporation, CPC, they call it. Then, after that . . .

WN: So, Experiment Station, you made how much?

LA: Oh, \$1.75, only twenty-five cents more. (Laughs) But we get bonus, too.

WN: Oh, Experiment Station?

LA: Yeah. Ten percent, at least. One dollar half [\$1.50] for regular worker, if you pick pineapple or cutting grass. But Experiment Station, \$1.75. Only twenty-five cents more.

WN: But you said get bonus?

LA: Yeah. Most of them get bonus, 10 percent.

WN: But what you got to do to get bonus?

LA: You got to work twenty-two days [a month] to get bonus. If no more, straight pay. Those days, hard time, you know. Not like now. What you make [in] one month before, [you make in] only one day today.

(Laughter)

LA: That's right.

WN: When you were up Haleakala Camp, what kind house you lived in?

LA: Plantation house. Small house.

WN: You lived with your friend?

LA: Yeah, I live with my friend. And then, in March, 1930, I went in Wailuku. March 5, 1930, I went down Wailuku, work for the shoe shop.

WN: How you got that kind work?

LA: My boss was selling shoes with somebody before inside the camp. Then, he asked me if I like work for him. Said, "Okay. I like try." I told him I like try. So, he picked me up, and then I tried. I was doing all right, that time, so he keep me. And I worked for him for five years.

WN: Your boss, what was his name?

LA: The Japanese? My boss? Itaro Watanabe. Wailuku Shoe Shop, they owned that.

WN: He used to come to you folks camp to sell shoes?

LA: Yeah. With somebody--one salesman. One Filipino salesman, too. That Filipino was going home Philippines, so my boss asked him to look for one good salesman to take his place. That Filipino recommended me to take his place. So, I tried. And then, he keep me for good. I think I made good salesman, I don't know. I can't imagine that because I can't sell more than other fellow.

WN: So, how come he chose you, you think?

LA: That Filipino was my friend, too. He knew that I can do the job, so he recommended me.

WN: That friend, you knew him in Philippines, or you knew him here?

LA: No, he was here. I know him over here because they always come, that time, to sell, that place.

WN: You used to buy from him?

LA: Yeah, I used to buy from him. Some shoes from him--working shoes. And he was going home Philippines for good. He no come back. So, my boss wanted somebody to take his place. That's why I worked for him.

WN: What kind of jobs you did working for Watanabe?

LA: I was shining shoes for him in the afternoon. During the day, I have to help them repair shoes and make shoes in the shop. They get the shoe store and shop. I help them to make shoes in the shop, sell shoes in the store. In the afternoon about 3 o'clock, I have to go out. Take some orders, deliver some orders, collect some money. They give me one car to drive, those days.

WN: What kind car?

LA: Ford Model A. You know the Model A? (Chuckles) Nineteen twenty-nine [1929], I think was. I was using that four, five years, though. Good car, that Model A.

WN: The shoes that Mr. Watanabe sold, all the shoes was all made by him or . . . .

LA: Yeah. Mostly made all by him. We go there in the camp, measure the feet--the customer, and then take the measurement to the shop, made-to-order.

WN: Oh, everything was made-to-order?

LA: Yeah, everything to order. So long fit and make the right thing, then.

WN: What camps you went to?

LA: Mostly the near camp. Puunene camps and Paia camps. Sometimes, we go Lahaina, too, but at first, I had to go with him. We go together. With my boss. Not only [to] Filipinos we sold. Mostly Japanese. I took care mostly the Filipinos, and he take care the Japanese. (Laughs) We sell for good price. Little bit higher than the ready-made, but better quality, fit better. So many of the people like because fit good, the price is reasonable price . . .

WN: Like how much was one pair of working shoes?

LA: Shoes, mostly we make this kind, until here, you know. [LA points to calf.]

WN: Oh, all the way up the calf?

LA: Yeah. Some, until here, see?

WN: Oh, up till the ankle.

LA: Was only \$5.50, like this. Five dollars and fifty cents, until here.

WN: For the ankle one?

LA: Yeah. The other one was about fifteen dollars. Until here.

WN: Fifteen dollars for the calf boots?

LA: Yeah, yeah. More than double, until here.

WN: How much was ready-made kind?

LA: This was about four dollar, four dollar half [\$4.50], like that. Those days, you see? But not now. Like the one over here now, about forty, fifty dollars already. (Laughs) Until here.

WN: Oh, calf boots?

LA: Like over here [LA points to ankle], now, about twenty dollars, eh? Until here. Twenty, twenty-five dollars. About five times [higher] now.

WN: How Mr. Watanabe got the supplies, the material to make this kind?

LA: He have to order from Mainland. Leather manufacturers and jobbers. The salesmen used to come every six months, over here, to sell six month's or one year's supply. He [Watanabe] have to buy. He get all the equipment from that.

WN: When you went take order, how many houses you went to in one day?

LA: Oh, about ten, I think, or maybe less than ten. If you [get] orders



[for] about three or five pairs already, I think that's enough. (Laughs) Three or five. Sometimes, you take only two [orders], but sometimes, you make seven or ten. So, if you take plenty the other day, don't have to go plenty (laughs) next one, eh? Because [if] you order plenty, you cannot finish [making] all. You have to promise what day you going deliver them--the goods.

WN: After you take order, how long take for make the shoe?

LA: About two weeks. The best way to deliver them is payday. They can pay you right away, see? Some of them told us, "You bring on payday." When they get the money. But those people you can trust, if they need the thing, you can deliver at first, and you collect later on.

WN: They have to put deposit when they order?

LA: No. Not necessary. No need deposit. Because we do not [take] order [from] anybody that you no can trust much.

WN: Oh, you knew all your customers?

LA: Yeah, mostly. I think, 90 percent, you know them. Only, sometimes, you get some hard luck. Go away, or sick, or die, or accident, that's the time we no can collect. You no can expect to get 100 percent. But the best way is to deliver the goods COD [cash on delivery], so no can miss. But sometimes, no can help. You go deliver the goods, sometimes he no stay home. Have to go back again, see?

WN: So, when they no stay home, what you do?

LA: You have to take back the merchandise.

WN: You no leave 'em over there?

LA: No leave 'em over there. You don't know whether that thing fit or no fit, too, eh? You got to try it if it fits. Suppose clothing little bit different. This one [shoes] had to fit. About 99 percent fit or 95 percent fit, because you measure already the fit. But one thing, you no can trust that guy, sometimes. All the time you go collect, he no stay home, maybe.

WN: How you learned to do this kind shoe work?

LA: I learned from over there. In the afternoon, I go sell. During the day, there's work inside the shop with them. For five years, I have to learn something, eh?

(Laughter)

WN: How much you got paid for working Watanabe's?



LA: He paid me thirty dollars, those years. Thirty dollars, one month. And then, on the commission, he gave me 10 percent. That's good pay, you know.

WN: Ten percent for each pair you sell?

LA: Yeah. Ten percent on the one you sell. If 10 percent, you sell \$100 [worth], ten dollar, eh? But then, I no sell only \$100. (Chuckles)

WN: You sell more than that?

LA: Yeah. I sell, average, \$300 or \$400.

WN: Three hundred to \$400 . . .

LA: A month. That's good. At 10 percent, that's about forty dollars more. So, I got seventy dollars [a month], but he gave me free kaukau and house. Everything free. Gasoline, he paid, too. I no pay anything already over there. Those days, you don't have to pay tax, too. Not like now, we pay big tax. So, I get about seventy, seventy-five dollars a month with all expenses paid, because I get free meals, free house, free gasoline, all everything. Pineapple place, you make about thirty, thirty-five dollars--forty dollars if you get bonus. (Laughs)

WN: So, you was going out Paia, Puunene Camps to take order for shoes?

LA: Yeah. Not all the time, though. When I was with my boss [Watanabe], Japanese, I used to go [take orders] most of the time. But when I was in Kahului [Kahului Shoe Shop, started by LA in 1934], half of the time I stay Kahului, I did not go already, because we get enough jobs [i.e., customers] already.

WN: When you was at the Watanabe Store, were there other people doing the same kind of thing like you from other stores?

LA: Only one, Makino Shoe Store. But he no go much outside [to the camps]. Only sometimes he went, those days. No more other place, only him. To make shoes and sell shoes, only Makino. No more other place [besides Watanabe].

WN: Where was his shop?

LA: Market Street. Just across our place.

WN: Wailuku?

LA: Yeah. Only about fifty yards away from our place. So, not too much competition.

WN: And Watanabe, only work shoes he sold?

LA: No. We sell dress shoes, too. But only men's shoes.

WN: How come only men's shoes?

LA: To keep ladies' shoes, no make too much money, because have to make complete line. Ladies' shoes is one thing no make too much money. Styles change every time, you know. You have to go invest big money. Like men's shoes, style not changed too much, especially the work shoes. Even myself, over here, I did not keep ladies' shoes in Kahului.

WN: Okay, one more question for the Watanabe Shoe Store. When you went out to the camps, how often would one customer buy shoes?

LA: Oh, about six months. The same customers--I mean, the regular customers. Yeah, about six months. Quick worn out because they use in the field. Wet and dry, wet and dry. And then, sometimes, they no need only one. They need two, three, sometimes, those people. You know why? If today rain, the one they wear today cannot be dry until tomorrow. Hard to put the wet one on the next day. They have to put the other one. So, they need two, three. Even when I was working [in the fields], I need two, three pairs, especially rainy season. You use plenty. You wear plenty. You need plenty to wear.

WN: What about stores like the Paia Plantation Store? They sold shoes, too?

LA: They sell work shoes, too. They sell plenty work shoes, too, but not all the one that people like.

WN: Was ready-made kind?

LA: Yeah, ready-made kind. Like the one we make [i.e., made-to-order shoes], little bit higher [price]. Dirt no go inside. Like the ready-made, always they make the tongue, they no sew up [as far as the] top. So, the dirt, plenty go inside. You no can wear. You got to take off the thing and shake like this. Like the one we measure, we sew the tongue all way to the top. You know why? They [ready-made shoes] not made to measure. [When] made to measure, you have to make room for the tongue. That part there is easier to put, but dirt go inside. That's how they made it. That's one reason why they no like ready-made, some people. And then, quick crooked, the ready-made. Some companies, they no make solid. Counter behind. Quick crooked.

So, Watanabe Store, finish?

WN: Then you started your own store?

LA: Sure, then I start my own.

WN: What made you start your own store?

LA: July, 1934, I bought one shoe shop in Kahului at 739 Fort Street.

WN: Fort Street?

LA: Yeah.

WN: How come you started your own?

LA: My boss [Watanabe] sold his shop in Wailuku to somebody else, and the buyer did not need any employees because he get big family. That one going be work for all themselves only. He sold to M. Omori. And then, the family all worked over there. He get two sons and one wife work over there. So, I moved to Kahului; I bought one place. Did I tell you that place where I bought? Yeah, 739 Fort Street, Kahului.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

LA: On July, 1934, I bought a shoe repair shop at 739 Fort Street in Kahului.

WN: How much you paid for the shop?

LA: Oh, \$1,500.

WN: This was for lease?

LA: For the machinery only, because I no own the building.

WN: You no own the building? Who owned the building?

LA: Was Kohatsu. Yeah, K. Kohatsu. I was renting the two-story building for nineteen years. The shop was on the ground floor, kitchen at the back. And I lived in the two-story bedroom, second floor.

WN: How you got the \$1,500 to buy the machinery?

LA: From my savings.

WN: So, that's all the expenses you needed to start?

LA: No, that's only for the equipment. Buying some materials and other things, I did not record all that, but about \$1,000 to start. Thousand four hundred [\$1,400], I think, some . . .

WN: You had to borrow any money?

LA: No, I did not borrow money. From my savings only. About \$1,400, I think.

WN: How much was rent?

LA: The rent was forty dollars. [LA later changed answer to forty-five dollars.]

WN: Forty dollars a month?

LA: A month. That includes the whole building, now. Was cheap, though. (Laughs)

WN: You mean, upstairs and downstairs?

LA: Downstairs, you see? But that did not last long, though.

WN: How big was your first shoe shop?

LA: Well, could hardly explain, though.

WN: About how many feet by how many feet?

LA: You mean, the area downstairs? I think floor area about 1,900 or 2,000 square feet. Area--foot area, you know. Just 2,000 square feet. Under the roof, but two-story high. Big, you know, the place. But junk house, though. About forty-years-old house.

WN: The house was how many bedroom?

LA: Two bedroom, upstairs. And then, in between the kitchen and the shop, get a small warehouse. A small warehouse only for small things. Beside the building, get one-car garage for my car, all included. And then, warehouse--one-car garage. Two-car garage, anyway, but I use for my car, one garage; the other one for merchandise, to put it. I was paying forty-five dollars.

WN: Forty-five dollars?

LA: Forty-five dollars. But the last five years, I think, I paid fifty dollars. So, you ask me some more questions.

WN: Okay.

LA: All those nineteen years I stayed there, I've always had a helper. A helper to repair shoes, bags, and other leather goods. Because we made also new work shoes.

WN: You sold work shoes, and what other kind shoes you sold?

LA: For a special order. Also for those handicapped people who cannot buy ready-made.

WN: What kind handicap?

LA: Oh, those from hospitals. Orthopedic, they call that? I don't

know what they call that.

WN: Orthopedic?

LA: Yeah. We make that.

WN: Oh, special kind shoes?

LA: Yeah, sometimes, he no can move. Sometimes, get brace. From the hospital, the state going pay that. They pay good money on that, you know.

WN: You said when you started your business, you didn't go out to the camps too much?

LA: No, I went. I even go to Lanai and Molokai, sometimes. I go there sell and collect. But mostly, get two Filipino store in Lanai and one Molokai. I get one friend over there on Molokai. Those Filipino stores, I leave my merchandise over there to sell for me. I give them commission. Just like consignment. But I give them some percentage. That was good, because I just bring the merchandise, they sell for me. Then when I go, I go sell, too. Same time, they give me some of their sales. One in Molokai, two in Lanai. So, I go sell over there. From 1945, I enlarged my store over there, sell some shoes. I sell work shoes, boots--any kind, belts, slippers, all leather goods, handbags.

WN: The leather materials, you got it from same place that Watanabe got his materials?

LA: Yeah. I get from the same company--Keystone Brothers in San Francisco.

WN: What brothers? How you spell it?

LA: K-E-Y-S-T-O-N-E. Keystone Brothers, and S. S. Brown and Company, and McPherson Brothers--that's the last.

WN: Three places?

LA: Three places. Give us ninety days to pay [for] the merchandise. Then I order my shoes from Santa Rosa Shoe Company in Santa Rosa [California]. I was the one that was first appointed to represent their company over here--Santa Rosa Shoe Company. I was making good, though.

WN: This [was] ready-made shoes?

LA: Ready-made shoes. Now, this guy get other agencies. Roland's [Shoes in Kahului] and other place. Now, anyplace, they sell.

WN: When you started selling ready-made shoes?

LA: When I stopped made-to-order shoes? I think, 1964, I stopped

making already. This kind made-to-order, I no make already.

WN: How come you stopped?

LA: No more time. No more time already. And then, I get the agency on this Santa Rosa. Just as good [as made-to-order], that's why. So those people that wanted [me] to make, I give them the same quality as what I make, Santa Rosa, so they buy. If really he does not like ready-made, I have to make, but only few. Lucky if you make about ten, twenty a month, that time already. Not like before, at least thirty, forty [orders in] one month. Lucky if we get ten, fifteen one month that time already when I stopped.

WN: Your customers was mostly Filipino?

LA: Mostly Filipino and Japanese. All mixed up, you know. But Japanese and Filipino, about 70 percent. The rest was 30 percent haole and . . . . Filipino and Japanese, number one too much. I get plenty Japanese, too, because I work for Japanese people long time. I get Filipinos, too, because I'm Filipino. But as far as repair is concerned, all nationalities.

WN: What was better business? Repair or selling?

LA: Oh, selling is the best. Selling is the best. Repair is good too--make good markup. Maybe 25 percent material, and then 75 percent profit--business profit. But take time. Take time, you know. You have to pay the man [worker], and then you pay the insurance for the worker. What the man can do, that's all you can do. Nothing can make good money unless selling. If you sell plenty, no can stop you. But repair, only the man can do. Maybe he make about thirty dollar, forty dollar one day, that's all. But selling, maybe, can make sixty dollar, seventy dollar, because no more limit, this kind. If you get good luck, you sell plenty, eh? This repairing, very good money, you can make a living, but there's a limit because what your hand [i.e., helper] can do. Just like barbershop. Barbershop, they make good money, too. Business steady. They work hard, but get limit, that. What you can do, that's all your money. But selling, you sell plenty, more money. No more limit. Repairing is good, but sometimes, I don't know. Sometimes, some job take time, and you no sell too much. You make only little bit out of that. But average repairing, business profits is about two-thirds [66 percent]. One-third, material, because for repair, you need material, you know. Suppose rubber heel [is needed], rubber heel, maybe, [costs] seventy-five cents [when] you buy from the company. You sell this, how much? Maybe four dollars.

WN: To pay for rubber heel?

LA: Yeah, seventy-five cents. Seventy-five cents for rubber heel. Maybe glue, nails, maybe [comes out to] one dollar--say one dollar already. Then, you sell four dollar for the labor--what you pay



the man to put in. You pay the man how much one hour? You pay him about three dollar, one hour, at least.

WN: You pay him three dollar, one hour?

LA: Yeah, three dollar, one hour, this time. I'm talking about the price nowadays, not like before, you know. You pay him three dollar, one hour nowadays. It takes him about ten minutes or seven minutes to put on that [heel]. Maybe he take one dollar from you, see? Insurance for him, unemployment compensation, wages--he take a dollar from you. So, you make about two dollar or one dollar [profit from each shoe repaired]. Have to pay rental, taxes, everything.

WN: But when you sell the shoes, what kind profit?

LA: The profit is better because sometimes you make 100 percent. You buy the shoes, good kind, you buy [for] twenty dollars. You sell for forty dollars, sometimes. On that, you pay tax. Mostly you buy [for] ten dollar, you sell [for] twenty dollars. Plus tax, would be twenty dollars, because the tax not your own. You add to the customer. So, you get 100 percent profit.

But only thing, you no can sell all the merchandise one time. You get stock over there, some no can sell, too. But make money. So long you get the smart to buy what kind you can sell. But you buy any kind that no can sell, that's waste money already. That's why work shoes, men's shoes, is good because 90 percent or 95 percent, you can sell all that. Ladies' shoes, lucky if you sell half. You bust [if] you buy [all at] one time. Cannot. You try look all those ladies' and children's shoes, how many day's stock over there. They no sell. They adding that in the book, though--shoe stock book. Ladies' shoes no can make too much money. Men's shoes and work shoes is the one that . . .

WN: In one day, when you first started your business in 1934, about how much in one day, you made? Gross volume?

LA: In one month. You go by one month, I think. About \$250-\$300. (Laughs)

WN: What about when you was going to move to Kahului Shopping Center--right at that time, about 1953--about how much you was making?

LA: Oh, the old place? You mean, when I was over there?

WN: Just when you about to quit the old place?

LA: Oh, that place. I was making \$3,500 average. That's gross, now. I'm talking about gross, you see? But the rent was cheaper.

WN: Where? Oh, the old place?

LA: The old place, only forty-five dollars [a month]. I get place to

live, car garage, the store, and the whole place. When I was over there [Kahului Shopping Center], the average over there about \$6,000--the average gross. But I pay about \$300-\$350 rent.

WN: Kahului Shopping Center?

LA: Yeah. The gross is higher, but rent is five, six, seven times--ten times [higher].

WN: You had to pay percentage?

LA: Yeah, you have to pay percentage [of gross sales]. The gross over there [LA's old location] was cheaper, but the rent was cheaper. Everything's cheaper. Taxes, before, was cheaper. So, not much difference. Only work much harder over here [Kahului Shopping Center], but little bit more money.

WN: When you had your first Kahului location, who was your competition?

LA: Makino.

WN: Makino, and then anybody else?

LA: No, nobody.

WN: So, in Kahului, you were the only one?

LA: Oh, Kahului, the only one. Wailuku get one [i.e., Makino]. That's why, not so bad, those days. Like now [today], plenty competition now. Kaahumanu Shopping Center, Roland's Shoe Store, all this kind came up. Liberty House, Sears Roebuck, this guy--Robin's, all came up. When I was [in business, it was] not so bad.

WN: You still went out to camps to take order and deliver?

LA: Not too much. When I was shopping center, not much already.

WN: But before you moved shopping center, you still used to go out?

LA: Yeah, I go out. About two times, one week.

WN: You [sold] made-to-order kind?

LA: Not made-to-order. Only sometimes. We go sell those ready-made.

WN: Okay. You have some more?

LA: How about those tennis rackets? I was selling tennis rackets, too.

WN: In your old store?

LA: In the old store, here. Since 1934, I was selling already. I



string by my own hand.

WN: How you got into that?

LA: The former owner of the shop I bought, he got that [i.e., sold tennis equipment]. He got that business together with this. So, I bought everything, that's why.

WN: Who was the former owner of the shop?

LA: Fujimura--Ikuji Fujimura. He passed away already, but. He got everything, see? So, I string rackets [by hand] for about nine years, I think. [From] 1934 to 1946, 1947.

WN: You knew how to string rackets from before?

LA: No. I learned from him. I saw him, how to make this by hand. By hand, he showed me. Not exactly, he showed me, but somebody showed me. Not him, too. And he get instruction book. Order from the company where you buy the material. And then, practice. I was string racket since the beginning, from 1934 up to 1946. Nineteen forty-six [1946], I bought the new machine to string those rackets. That's the thing that I made money, little bit.

WN: You made money on that?

LA: Yeah, made money on that. The string cost you only one dollar. You sell for five dollar. You going to string that, [it takes] one hour, you know. One hour, one racket.

WN: In those days, who played tennis?

LA: All the clubs. Only mostly clubs. Maui, plenty here. Honolulu, not too much, that time, but they [Maui teams] come Honolulu play. We get our two teams over here who play--some Filipino teams. The best team over here go Honolulu.

WN: Like what kind clubs? What kind names the clubs had?

LA: Maui Filipino Tennis Club, Wailuku Tennis Club, Lahaina Tennis Club. All those clubs. Get some Maui Country Club--those haoles--they get their own. And then, all the clubs play each other against. League, they call that. Mostly I strung all those rackets. I think, 70 percent, at least, I strung. That's why I know plenty. And I used to play tennis, too.

WN: From before?

LA: From 1934 up to 1960. Until 1960.

WN: So, after you started stringing rackets, you started to play?

LA: Yeah, I have to play, too. That's why I get the business, eh?

(Laughs) That's why, I took the business. So, my name is well known to those players.

WN: So, you strung for about nine years, how come you quit? How come you stopped stringing rackets?

LA: From 1934 up to 1946, I stopped the stringing by hand. I bought new machine to string, so that I can do better job, faster job, and I can get more customers. I can string more.

WN: You told me that you was the first one on Maui to get the machine?

LA: Yeah, I was the first one to get that. Not until 1968, or 1970s, somebody bought one machine. Like Honolulu Sporting Goods, they get one now. They put that in 1971, I think, or 1972. And one [in] Lahaina. That's all. Only two on Maui. That machine, before, I bought only [for] about \$350. Now, about \$700, you know.

WN: Was worth it or what?

LA: Worth it, yeah. Was \$300. [Within] one month or two months, I can get the money back already, that.

WN: You used to sell new tennis rackets, too?

LA: Yeah, I was selling. I was selling. Sell them, we string them.

WN: Anything else you sold? Balls?

LA: Yeah. Tennis balls, tennis rackets, tennis shoes, tennis supplies. Sun visor, anything made for tennis. I got tennis equipment.

WN: What was the name of your store?

LA: Kahului Shoe Shop. I got the picture over there, too.

(LA gets picture. Taping stops, then resumes.)

WN: Okay, 1953, you moved to Kahului Shopping Center, yeah? What made you decide to go into the shopping center?

LA: The place is more clean [and there were] more people. The traffic is more over there. That's why I went over there. The old place, they going dissolve that; they going make parking. So, I decide to go over there because more traffic, and maybe, better business. That's why I decided to go there.

WN: That's when it was just opening, the shopping center?

LA: Yeah. That's the opening. First time open. That's why I decided to go there.

WN: How much capital you needed to move?

LA: Not too much because I [already] get some inventory. At least, about \$3,000, that's all. To put more stock, and then bought some equipment. I need only about \$3,000. I put shelving, and some new cash registers, and so on.

WN: You bought shelving and what?

LA: Shelves, to stock the shoes, everything over there. Shelving. That cost me about \$3,000, including about \$2,000 to buy some more goods. Not much because I get some already over there [the old store], that time.

WN: The new shop, was it bigger than the old shop?

LA: No, little bit smaller. Because no more warehouse over there-- limited over there. Like over there [Kahului Shopping Center], that one only about 600 square feet. Over there, see? That side [the old location] is about 2,000 square feet. But [Kahului Shopping Center] much better because heavy traffic and clean. Of course, I sold more over there than over [at] that old place.

WN: So, when you moved to Kahului Shopping Center, you did any more take order and deliver kind?

LA: No, not much that time because I no get time. I have to be in the store all the time. Because my helper cannot stay there after 5 o'clock [p.m.]. Sometimes I close later than 5 o'clock. Like Friday night, I have to open until 9 o'clock. Oh, we open from 8 [o'clock a.m.] to 9 [o'clock p.m.], Friday. Have to be there all day. Only my mealtime, I have to go out. I was so busy when I was over there.

WN: You was living here in Kahului?

LA: Yeah.

WN: Okay. So, in 1972, you retired?

LA: Yeah. October, 1972, I retired, and I sold the business that month.

WN: Was the business doing good at that time?

LA: Yeah, was going good. Not bad. Same thing.

WN: Did you want your children to take over at all?

LA: No. They were going school, yet, that time, and I no think they like that business. One married already and two were going school.

WN: So, who moved into your place after you sold it?

LA: Joe Espiritu bought the place, but he last only about two years.

But after the lease, he quit. He did not renew the lease.

WN: So, what's over there, now?

LA: Oh, I think weight reducing . . . . What that? (Laughs) Clinic. Weight reducing clinic. Used to be architect. You did not go see the place, eh?

WN: I saw. Yeah, weight reducing clinic, now. As you look back and think about your business, how you feel now?

LA: I no think I go back now, because I'm too old. After I retired, I went go traveling, though. We went Europe, we went New York. In 1965, we went New York--the World's Fair, we went over there. In 1973, we went Europe. With my wife. In 1975, we went Canada. And then, 1977, we went California. So many towns in California and Nevada--Lake Tahoe. About seven times now, we went Mainland, anyway. I do lots of traveling. My wife went nine times Philippines already. She [first] came Hawaii 1948. Nine times, she went back. And I went six times to the Philippines. So, we did lots of traveling. See relatives, see the place.

WN: So, you think going into your own business was good for you?

LA: I thought so, but at least, I made a living. But if I work for somebody else, it was, I think, better. When you run your own business, when you retire, you no get anything except your business, if you sell 'em. But if you work for somebody, plantation like that or county, you get your retirement income from the county. You get your Social Security, too, same time. So, you get two place your money come. Like plantation, the same thing. You get your Social Security, you get your plantation money income. That's why I think you work for somebody, sometimes better. But if you get good luck [out] of your own business, if you sold the business, you get your lump sum, too. Because you get the money in your business. Like me, not so bad, because at least, I sold my business.

But I get one friend someplace. He get one business. When he close up, nobody buy his business. I get one friend someplace Honolulu. He get this small business. He like close up and retire, [but] nobody buy his grocery business. He got to sell very cheap all the merchandise, and he no get nothing. And then, when he retired, he get only the Social Security. Only small amount of what he sold, what's left of his merchandise, he get the money, that's all. Like me, my business was very small. Inventory was only about \$24,000, but I sold 'em. That's just like my lump sum, that one already. So, not so bad. But if I no sell 'em, and sell very cheap, very cheap, I would get hard time. I don't know how long you can sell that, little by little. But I sold all one time, that's why, not so bad. Although I sell cheaper--10 percent of the cost, I sold 'em.

WN: So, how come you didn't want to keep continuing?

LA: Because I retired, I'm too old. I get part blind, too, one eye. I lost my left eyesight, so I didn't continue. I can hire somebody to run 'em and just supervise, although I no work, but I no like too much humbug already. I like to keep my mind one place. No worry anything. I rather sell it. To run your own business, you got plenty headaches, too. You have to think. If you work for somebody, after hard day of work, you forget everything. They can go anyplace. But your own, you got to work. You got to think how you make money. I did that for how many years? Over forty years. But too bad I cannot quit because I bought the equipment already, and I did not have any job to do something else. I was too old, [so] I just continued.

Some other Filipino businessman make better than me, I don't know. Me, not so bad. I made a living. Guerrero [George Guerrero, another interviewee] made good, though. Sevilla [A.B. Sevilla, another interviewee], I don't know. I know just Guerrero made good. But this Guerrero, he get one grocery store, eh? I know grocery store, he no make too much money on those. Because I get one grocery store in [Lower] Paia, part-time with somebody. No make money, grocery store. A small one.

WN: When? You had a grocery store?

LA: Yeah, Paia. Partner, Domingo Felipe Store. Yeah, no make money, that one.

WN: You was partner with Domingo?

LA: Yeah, before. (Laughs)

WN: From when to when?

LA: Oh, I think long time ago. When he went home [to the Philippines], I took my money.

WN: I mean, for how long you was in there--partner?

LA: About ten years, I think, I was with him. From 1936 up to 1966, I think. [The store was in operation from 1936 to 1966. However, LA's involvement only lasted ten years.]

WN: From 1936, when you had your own shoe shop?

LA: I get my shop already, but I partner with him. Half-partner.

WN: About ten years?

LA: Yeah, about for ten years. But I no lose money. We no lose money, but no make too much money. I partner with him over there. [Lower]

Paia. You remember Paia Filipino Store?

WN: Yeah. Domingo Felipe. You started 'em together?

LA: Yeah, start 'em together. I get \$100 share. After about ten years--we get interest little bit, every year--after I took my money, they give me \$300--something. So, I no lose money.

WN: He closed same time? You folks closed 'em?

LA: No, they were running. They were running after that. Grocery store no make too much money. Especially Filipinos move around, like that. They take order inside the camp and deliver. You know, this kind grocery store no make too much money. The markup is too small. Only 25 or 50 percent. You buy one bag rice, maybe you make only three, four dollar, one bag. You sell, I don't know how much, but you make three dollar. Then you deliver over there, [use] gasoline, and you go back and forth. You no can collect [debts] one time.

WN: What kind work you did in the store?

LA: Partner. I no go over there. I just buy stocks. I just partner only. I get my own business. I just buy shares, that's all.

WN: Oh, you never worked over there?

LA: I no work. They work.

WN: Wasn't doing good, so you . . .

LA: Was not doing good, so I took my money. Some, they no collect [debts]. They give credit to anybody, and then they no collect all. So, I had [a business] on my own, so not so bad. Sevilla, I don't know. He was partner with Arquero and Sevilla Store, before, but they quit. Now, he runs his own [A.B. Sevilla Store and Travel Agency in Wailuku]. Now, he made good, I think. He get plenty house right now. (Chuckles)

Guerrero, same thing. He was selling his own. But one thing, Guerrero made good. He bought one place Wailuku, before. He made the store, and then he sell the whole thing, see? The store and building. So, he made good money. But as far as business is concerned, I no think they make too much money. I know, grocery store, the store not like supermarket like that, no make money.

WN: So, you think shoe was better?

LA: Oh, shoe was much better. You can see the markup. Your shoes, like that, you buy ten dollar, sell twenty dollar. Can goods, you buy twenty cents, you sell only twenty-five cents, how going make money? Rice, maybe you sell twenty-five dollar. Maybe you buy how much? Maybe about twenty dollar.



WN: So, you make five dollars.

LA: Only five dollars. It all depends. One thing no good for them is their sales. They give credit. They deliver the goods, and then come back again. And that fellow, maybe he no can pay all one time. Maybe you go, he no stay home. Bumbai you go back again. Cash and carry, all right. If you collect all, all right, even it's for credit.

WN: When you had your shoe store, you gave credit at all?

LA: Hardly. In the beginning, about 25 percent credit. And then, lucky if get 5 percent credit. Sometimes you got to (tape garbled) in the store, you know.

WN: How come grocery stores give plenty credit, and you folks didn't give too much?

LA: You mean, their sales to the customer? The grocery stores, they sell so much. They go by volume. Cash and carry. So, then, plenty competition. So, they no can put up much the price. Competition, see? Like us, our goods is slow to move. So, we got to mark up double. Like if you selling this kind jewelry, they buy one dollar, they sell two dollar or three dollar. Most of them do that. They buy one dollar, they sell three dollar. Like shoes like that, most of them, they buy it one dollar, they sell two dollar. Grocery, they buy one dollar, they sell dollar half [\$1.50], the most. Little bit different. But their goods is faster to go, because we need every day, these groceries. So, they can make up easier because they sell plenty.

But these food business like the Guerrero, Domingo, how can they make up that? And they deliver, and then they go collect themselves. How can? Got to pay your expense. Like supermarket, now, you go there, you pay cash. Cash and carry. No more additional expense, already. You get your money [pay], you come back again. (Laughs) Like them [small grocery stores], they got to wait for a month [to collect debts]. Maybe fifteen days to a month. But time, now, change anyway. Not like before, our days--Domingo or Guerrero. Now, every [other] week pay. Before, one time, one month. Payday. I'm talking about payday, now. So, that is different, now. But supermarket make good money, now.

I think that's all, eh?

WN: Yeah. I think so.

LA: All pau.

WN: Thank you very much.

END OF INTERVIEW

**STORES and  
STOREKEEPERS of  
Paia & Puunene, Maui**

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